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Practice and Prospect

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THE AMOUNT OF LATIN READING IN THE HIGH SCHOOL

In the report of the Commission on College Entrance Requirements in Latin the minimum amount of reading to be done was fixed as the *equivalent* of the first four books of the *Gallic War*, the orations against Catiline, for the Manilian Law and for Archias, and the first six books of the *Aeneid*. These amounts have been generally accepted by colleges and universities, and may be said at the present time to represent the standard of work which they expect of the high schools. In fixing these amounts the commission did nothing revolutionary. It hardly did more than to make a definite statement of what had come to be a fairly widespread practice, which was followed, with some exceptions, throughout the country.

It need scarcely be said that the arrangement represents what the colleges and universities think the high schools ought to do, rather than what the high schools think they ought to do, or can do. For the requirements, as the name of the commission indicates, are simply requirements for entrance, and do not primarily or necessarily constitute an ideal high-school course. It has seemed to the writer desirable, therefore, to invite an expression of views by the secondary teachers themselves, and to present these in the *Journal*. It seemed to him that some valuable suggestions might thus be obtained, which might help to bring about such future modification as would make the requirements correspond more fully to present conditions existing in the high school.

A number of letters were accordingly sent out to teachers in high schools and academies in all parts of the country, containing various questions bearing on the Latin authors read in their classes. The present article will deal with the replies only in so far as they relate to the amount of reading done. Later on, other articles will take up the specific authors and works which they think should be read, and several other matters connected with the high-school course in Latin.

The replies indicate that, taking this course as a whole, a majority of the teachers think that the amounts of reading mentioned are reasonable. Out of 126 teachers only 11 think the requirements are too high throughout the course, while only 8 think they are all too low. And even these views are in most instances due to peculiar conditions, as when either more or less than five periods a week are allowed for Latin during all or part of the course, or when pupils enter the first year with some previous knowledge of Latin, acquired in the grades. Some think the requirements are too high because of

inadequate common-school preparation, others think they are too low when classes are "properly prepared," or when "the first year's work is thoroughly done."

But the same unanimity does not exist with reference to the reading required in the individual years, and it is especially the second and third years in which the experience of high-school teachers is at variance with the requirements. In addition to those mentioned above who consider the requirement for all the years either too great or too small, views of a similar kind are held with regard to the individual years as follows:

	Too much	Too little
Second Year (four books of Caesar)	41	4
Third Year (six orations of Cicero)	10	19
Fourth Year (six books of Virgil)	11	7

These figures show that the requirement for the second year is quite generally felt to be too great, while that of the third year is, if anything, considered too small.

The point is made, and justly, that the amount of reading in the first four books of Caesar is about the same as in the six orations of Cicero. Naturally the speed of the pupil ought to increase from year to year. Even if most of the Caesar or Nepos is easier than Cicero, the pupil has studied Latin only half as long when he attacks them, and has had no experience with a Latin author at all. More than that, it is felt that the work of the first high-school year, in which several new branches are taken up for the first time among strange conditions, to say nothing of the comparatively greater loss due to the first summer vacation, necessarily leaves many gaps, which it takes much time in the second year to fill. This is a handicap which does not exist, to anything like the same extent, in the third year. Certainly, the work of these two years must be admitted to be very unevenly divided between them.

Several suggestions are made incidentally for remedying the difficulty. One is to put one of the books of Caesar off till the third year. The ready objection to this would no doubt be that there is already a good deal of sameness in one whole year of Caesar as it is. Another proposal is to carry over and continue the grammar and exercise work of the first year into the second, to begin Caesar or Nepos some two or four months after the beginning of the year, and read less of the author than we do now. Several teachers have found that this plan brings their pupils through in stronger condition than if they begin reading immediately and try to read more. It has the merit of allowing time for rounding out and strengthening the pupil's acquaintance with the forms and fundamental usages of the language, which he needs in order to do the reading itself with profit.

Still a third way proposed is to read a good deal of Latin easier than Caesar, even if it must be made to order, such as *Fabulae Faciles*, during the first part

of the year, and to allow that to count in place of a part of the Caesar or Nepos. Much can be said for this also. For the reading of a considerable amount of such simple Latin as *Fabulae Faciles*, for example, would give the pupil facility in handling words, forms, and constructions in the order peculiar to Latin. It is undoubtedly the lack of this facility, acquired through practice, which, next to ignorance of words, forms, and constructions, is the most serious obstacle to progress in the earlier stages of the study. Others would study one book of Caesar very thoroughly, and then read the rest rapidly, making use of the knowledge thus acquired. Still others, finally, would simply cut down the requirement of the second year to the equivalent of three books instead of four. A specific recommendation made by several teachers is to leave out the campaign of Ariovistus (book i. 30-54) on account of its unusual difficulties.

If the case really amounts to a choice, as many feel that it does, between dropping a part of the reading requirement or dropping the work in grammar and composition during the second year, there can be little question that the reading must be curtailed. For it will not do to sacrifice such thoroughness as is attainable at this stage to the mere covering of so much ground.

When it comes to adding something to the requirement, as in the third year, that is, of course, a very much easier matter. And it is encouraging to find that teachers are beginning to think more and more frequently of other ways of doing this than by simply reading more of the same kind of matter that they have already been reading throughout the year. Some of the editions of Cicero now contain a selection of his letters also, and a few have parts of the *Catiline* of Sallust. These are being read in many cases either as substitutes for some of the orations, or in addition to them. A few teachers read considerable amounts of Nepos in this year also, or Ovid, or the *Phormio*, in the simplified prose version recently published.

In the case of Virgil the proposal to reduce the amount of reading is frequently coupled with a desire for a wider outlook and a more intimate dealing with the literary aspects of the poem than is now possible.

Extracts from the answers themselves will serve to give a fuller idea of the views of high-school teachers, and of their reasons for them.

1. If the work in Caesar could be shortened or supplemented by material of less difficult construction, pupils would not be so frequently discouraged with second-year Latin.

2. I would suggest no change, except that the requirement be made flexible enough to adapt itself to the needs of different classes, as well as to the methods of different teachers. Quality, in my opinion, counts more than quantity, and room should be left for the individual teacher's judgment.

3. I find the Caesar class bubble over with pride at reading rather large amounts toward the end of the year. I like the confidence they acquire.

4. The second-year's work needs a radical overhauling—first, some simplified graded text, like *Fabulae Faciles*, then passages selected and perhaps simplified from Caesar, if Caesar is to remain the principal classic of the second year.

5. I think that far more satisfactory results would be obtained in the second year if there were time for a very intensive study of one book; the pupils would have a much better grasp of forms and syntax, and they would receive the necessary practice in prose composition. In the third year I would omit one of the Catilinarian orations, and devote the time to a systematic study of Roman life.

6. I think the equivalent of five books of Virgil would be sufficient. Then it would be possible thoroughly to review one book, so that it would become a real part of the student's literary equipment.

7. In the second year the pupil should learn to read connected discourse. This takes time, and if four books of a work as hard as Caesar are required, the real object of the year, namely, learning to read, can hardly be accomplished. The other purpose of the year is the learning of syntax in a formal way, and this may be done as well with a small amount of material as with a large one.

8. Three books of the length of *B.G.* ii, iii, iv. This would permit the carrying over of "preparatory Latin" into the second year for some six or eight weeks. Too little time is spent on simpler Latin prose than Caesar.

9. I consider all of these amounts excessive in a four-year Latin course, particularly the demand of four books of Caesar or its equivalent in the second year, after a meager and hasty study of the usual Latin primer in the first year. Our pupils do not read Caesar; they must rehearse elementary paradigms and syntax throughout the whole of the second year on Caesar. We must either make a five-year course, with two years of Latin before taking up Caesar, or else one and a half years of preliminary Latin with easy reading selections, and then a half-year of about two books of Caesar, but carried through thoroughly and intelligently.

10. I am opposed to any specific requirement except as to preparation of the teacher and foundation for the work on the part of the pupils. By "foundation" I mean orderly progress through the schools.

11. Course in ——— High School: *second year*, one term of Caesar, one term of Nepos; *third year*, one term, the orations against Catiline; one term, *Aeneid* i, Ovid, about 300 lines; *fourth year*, one term, *Aeneid* ii-v; one term, Cicero, *Manilian Law* and *Archias*. I may add some Sallust or Virgil's *Bucolics*.

12. My preference would be a smaller amount of required Virgil, as with many classes the literary side of the poem has to be slighted, and this is, in case of the many who do not go beyond the high school, much to be regretted.

13. In the third year, in addition to the above work, my classes read the *Phormio* (in Fairclough and Richardson's simplified edition). I should like to put *Archias* in the fourth year, reducing the Virgil requirement from six books to five.

14. I prefer to have my classes read Virgil the third year, if possible. Then they can read more than the required amount of Cicero in the fourth year, which increases their interest, as well as their vocabulary.

15. The amounts required for a certificate injure the quality of our work.

16. Reduce the second-year requirement to three books of Caesar or its equivalent. I sincerely hope the association will take steps in this direction.

17. If any time remains (after five orations of Cicero and five books of Virgil) read a little Ovid, or Horace, or Cicero, say, the *De Senectute*, or an adaptation of Terence. A little variety adds zest; too much of one author kills interest. This is especially true of the second and third year.